



U.S. Department of Justice

2100 Jamieson Avenue

Alexandria, Virginia 22314 703-299-3700

NEWS RELEASE
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For further information, contact

Kim Williams 703-842-4050

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United States Department of State, and Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), all working together within the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in Washington, D.C., announced that an Egyptian national pled guilty today to using his position as a driver at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, D.C. to secure fraudulent Saudi diplomatic visas to help aliens enter the United States illegally.

Mohamed Abdel Wahab Yakoub, a.k.a. Mohamed Wardi, a 61-year-old native of Egypt and a resident of Maryland, pled guilty before the Honorable Leonie Brinkema in the Eastern District of Virginia to one count of smuggling aliens into the United States. Yakoub is facing a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years when he is sentenced by Judge Brinkema on April 7, 2006. Yakoub is also facing deportation to Egypt following his sentencing.

ICE agents first arrested Yakoub, who was fired by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in late 2002, at Dulles International Airport on February 14, 2005, upon his arrival on a flight from Cairo, Egypt. JTTF agents in Washington had been investigating Yakoub and his alleged human smuggling scheme for more than a year. At this time, JTTF has no information indicating that any of those illegal aliens who entered the United States via this alleged smuggling scheme had any terrorist ties.

According to the Indictment, Yakoub was known to individuals in Egypt and the Philippines as an employee of the Saudi Embassy who had the ability to secure fraudulent Saudi diplomatic visas to help Egyptian and Filipino aliens get into the United States.

According to the statement of facts signed by Yakoub and adopted by him in court, Yakoub prepared employment contracts and letters on Saudi Embassy letterhead falsely stating that a Saudi diplomat was requesting an A-3 visa for Egyptians and Filipinos to work for the Saudi diplomat in the United States. These fraudulent letters, complete with Saudi government stamps, were then sent to the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, or to the U.S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines, to help either Egyptian aliens or Filipino aliens receive U.S. visas for entry into this country.

On several occasions, the U.S. Embassies in Egypt and the Philippines approved the visa applications, believing that these aliens would be working for Saudi diplomats in the United States. The aliens eventually used the fraudulent visas to enter the United States illegally and none of them ever worked for any diplomat or any other employee of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia after arrival in this country.

Yakoub admitted that he charged each alien between \$5,000 and \$7,000 for securing the false Saudi diplomatic visas allowing them to enter the United States. “Anytime you have an individual exploiting his post at an Embassy in the United States to smuggle people into this country illegally, it raises serious homeland security concerns,” said Thomas Madigan, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE in Washington, D.C. “Thankfully, we have closed down this human smuggling pipeline.”

The United States Attorney commended the dedication and commitment of the joint effort of Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The United States Attorney also commended Assistant United States Attorney Steven D. Mellin, who prosecuted the case.

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